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756 grandfather, thus acquiring the reputation of prophets. Whatever they learn either from conjecture, from secret intelligence, or from their own examination, they predict to be about to happen with infinite pomposity, and are always listened to with as much attention as if they were actually inspired. Should their prophecies not be approved by the event, they are never at a loss for excuses to shelter their authority. Sometimes, in the dead of the night, they suddenly announce the enemy's [726] approach with a whistle or a pipe. All are awakened, and without once calling in question the truth of the juggler's prediction, fly to arms. The women and children betake themselves to a place of safety, and whilst they pass [722] hours, nay whole nights, in the fear of death, and their husbands in threatening it to the assailants, not one of the enemy makes his appearance. But that the faith in their prophecies, and the authority of the prophets, may suffer no diminution, they declare, with a smile, that the hostile assault has been averted by their grandfather the devil. At other times a body of enemies often rushes upon them on a sudden, when not one of these prophets has either foreseen or foretold the danger of an attack. A ridiculous event, à propos to this subject, occurs to my recollection. About

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despair of escape, inspires the naturally fearful with courage, which a Lacedemonian would admire, and which Europe desires to see in her warriors.

Moreover, being lovers of liberty and roving, they choose to own no law, and bind themselves to their cacique by no oaths of fidelity. Without leave asked on their part, or displeasure evinced on his, they remove with their families whithersoever it suits them, and join some other cacique; and when tired of the second, return with impunity to the horde of the first. This is quite common, and a matter of surprize to no one that knows how fleeting is the faith, how mutable the will of the Indians. Should a report be spread by uncertain or suspicious authors, that the enemy are coming in a few days, it is enough. Numbers, dreading the loss of life more than of fame, will desert their cacique, and hasten with their families to some well-known retreats. Lest however they should be branded with the name of deserters and cowards, they say they are going out to hunt. Hence, whenever we priests had to defend the new colonies filled with savage assailants, and almost destitute of inhabitants to repel them, we generally made more use of craft and threats than of force. The danger, or the fear of it, being dissipated, these fugacious heroes at length came home, no

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621 722 157 one daring to accuse them of cowardice, though no one could be ignorant that fear prompted their departure, security their return.

622 721 [273] Whenever a cacique determines upon undertaking an excursion, a public drinking-party is appointed. Heated with that luscious beverage, prepared from honey or the alfaroba, they zealously offer their services to the cacique, who invites them to war, sing triumph before the victory with festive vociferations, and, (who would believe it?) diligently execute when sober, what they promised in a state of intoxication. That love is kindled by love, as fire by fire, and that friends are gained by liberality, are trite proverbs in Europe, and have been experienced by us in our long commerce with the Abipones. A cacique who seldom gives a repulse will have numerous, obedient, and affectionate hordesmen. Kind words or looks, the marks of good-will, avail but little amongst the savages, unless accompanied with beneficence. They require at the cacique's hands whatever they take it into their heads to wish for, believing that his office obliges him to satisfy the petitions of all. If he denies them anything, they say he is not a captain, or noble, and insolently bestow upon him the disgraceful appellation of wood-Indian—*Acumi Lanaĕaik*. The cacique has nothing, either in his arms or his

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like an acorn, is applied to the bole of the softer, and whirled quickly round with both hands. By this mutual and quick attrition of both woods, a little dust is rubbed off which at the same moment catches fire and emits smoke; to this the Indians apply straw, cow-dung, dry leaves, &c. for fuel. The soft wood used for this purpose is taken either from the tree ambaỹ, from the shrub caraquatà, or from the cedar; but the harder, which they whirl round with the hand, comes from the tree tataỹi, which affords a saffron-coloured wood, as hard as box, and fit for dying clothes yellow, together with mulberries very like those of our own country.

Whenever they think fit to sleep at noon, or pass the night by the way, they anxiously look out for some place affording an opportunity of water, wood, and pasture. If there arise any suspicion of a hostile ambuscade, they hide themselves in lurking holes, rendered inaccessible by the nature of the place. You would say that they and their families are at home, wherever they go, for they carry about mats to serve for a house, as a snail does its shell. Two poles are fixed into the ground, and to them is tied a mat, twice or thrice folded to exclude the wind and rain. That the ground upon which they lie may not be wetted by a heavy shower, they providently dig a little channel at the side

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fortune, that, abandoning their project of plundering the colony, they sought security in the adjacent woods. But being prevented from this by the Abipones, they rushed off on all sides. The enemies hurried away at full gallop; the Abipones endeavoured to overtake them. It was not a fight, but a race between the fugitives and their pursuers. The contest consisted more in the swiftness of their steeds than in weapons, which were sent backwards and forwards, but, because badly aimed, without injuring very many. Our victors returned to the colony when the night was far advanced, some not till the morning, all safe and sound, (except one, whose head was bruised with a club,) and, what was very surprizing, quite sober, having exhaled the effects of the liquor, not with sleeping, but with riding and fighting. How many of the enemies were killed and wounded I do not know: but that more than two hundred were put to flight by seventy drunken men was a noble victory for us. Let us now treat of the other preparations which the Abipones make previous to a fight.

Every thing being in readiness for the drinking-party, which is held before a battle, their chief anxiety is to conceal their droves of horses from the eyes and hands of the enemy. Reserving the best within the neighbouring

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722 stalls, that they may be ready for the uses of war, they place the remainder in stations, access to which is rendered difficult to the enemy either by the high bank of a river, the intervention of a wood, or their ignorance of the way. They also look out for places of concealment for their wives and children, and all that are unable to defend themselves. The Spaniards told me they had often seen whole Indian families plunged up to the neck in lakes and rivers. 726 As soon as ever a report is spread amongst the Abipones of the approach of an enemy, they immediately stain their faces, and carry about bundles of weapons, and a military trumpet, which they blow chiefly in the dead of the night, that the enemies may know from their scouts that they have shaken off all fear, and are vigilant and desirous of the conflict. When certified of the approach of the enemy's forces, 723 they provide for their safety in various ways. 726 If they are few in comparison with their adversaries, they make up for the want of strength by craft. That they may not be obliged to join in open battle, they use various artifices to prevent the enemy from gaining access to their stations. They set out on the road, and surprize them by an ambuscade, or make themselves appear more numerous by redoubled tumult of military trumpets, or leaving a num-